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# Abraham Lincoln Birthplace

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE • KENTUCKY



The Boundary Oak.

Near this famous landmark stood the cabin in which Lincoln was born.



# Abraham Lincoln

## Birthplace

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

On a raw frontier farm of rolling land on the edge of "the Barrens," in the cabin by the Sinking Spring, was born the man whose strides carried him awkwardly, yet majestically, over a path which began in common Kentucky clay and ended in immortality. Here was born the man who said, "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?" More enduring than bronze or marble, this spot shall speak its message of the mystery and majesty of life to Americans down through the ages.

### The Lincoln Family

At the close of the Revolution, during Indian wars and raids, the Lincoln family moved to the frontier region of Kentucky. The father of Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President, was Thomas Lincoln; his grandfather was Abraham, for whom he was named. His great-grandfather was John Lincoln, who had moved from near Reading, Pa., to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. John Lincoln's son, Abraham, together with his family, moved across the mountains into Kentucky sometime between 1782 and 1784. Here Abraham, the grandfather, was killed by an Indian from ambush. This event prob-

ably occurred in May 1786. Thomas, the youngest son, was then about 10 years old.

About 1800, Thomas Lincoln settled in Elizabethtown and during the next few years was a hard-working and industrious man of that community, acquiring a reputation as a carpenter.

On June 10, 1806, Thomas Lincoln filed a declaration of intention to marry Nancy Hanks, and 2 days later, they were married by Rev. Jesse Head. The newly married couple made their home in Elizabethtown. Here their first child, Sarah, was born in 1807.

The image of Nancy Hanks is blurred and uncertain to us of this generation. One authority has said of her, "dim as the dream of a shifting mirage, her face and figure waver through the mists of time and rumor." Although her physical features left no definite impression upon the minds of those who years later tried to recall her image, there is an almost unanimous agreement among these witnesses concerning her mental and spiritual attributes. That she was possessed of a fine native intelligence, courage, and a morality above reproach and that she was kind and affectionate seem fairly clear.

### The Birthplace of Abraham Lincoln

On December 12, 1808, Thomas Lincoln bought for \$200 in cash the 300-acre Sinking

*The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.*

Spring Farm, situated a few miles south of Hodgen's Mill. Here, he and his wife and their infant daughter took up their abode in a one-room log cabin near a large limestone spring of cool water which had given its name to the place. It was in this one-room log cabin near the Sinking Spring that the child, Abraham, was born to Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln on February 12, 1809.

The Lincolns lived about 2½ years at the birthplace site, which eventually was lost to them because of a defective land title. Prior to midsummer in 1811 they moved to a farm on Knob Creek, about 10 miles to the northeast. Their residence there lasted only a few years, for in November or December 1816, Thomas Lincoln left Kentucky and made a new home in the wilderness settlement of Little Pigeon Creek, about 16 miles north of the Ohio River, in Indiana. Nancy Hanks Lincoln, the mother of Abraham, lived only about 2 years after they moved to

Indiana. An epidemic came to the little settlement on Pigeon Creek and, while attending the stricken, she herself was taken ill and died within a week, on October 5, 1818. The mother of Abraham Lincoln was buried in an unmarked grave in a little clearing in the deep woods.

#### The Birthplace Cabin

From 1861 to the present, the history of the log cabin which is now displayed within the memorial building is fairly clear. Its history prior to 1861 is a matter of controversy and doubt. Nor is there conclusive evidence concerning the specific location of the original cabin. Certain testimony indicates that it stood on top of the knoll where the memorial building is now situated; still other that it stood under the knoll, a short distance from the Sinking Spring and about on a level with it.

*Traditional Lincoln birthplace cabin before it was dismantled.*





*Bible of Thomas Lincoln, father of Abraham Lincoln.*

Dr. George Rodman was the first individual to become interested in preserving the cabin. In March 1861, he bought a log cabin standing on the birthplace farm and moved it a little over a mile to the north and reerected it on his own farm. Here it remained until 1895, when it was purchased by a representative of A. W. Dennett of New York and returned to the Lincoln farm where 110½ acres of land had been purchased about this time by Dennett. In the succeeding years the cabin was dismantled and the logs carefully marked and taken to various expositions throughout the country. Eventually the cabin was stored in the basement of the old Poppenhausen mansion at College Point, Long Island, N.Y. It remained there until 1906 when it was purchased by the Lincoln Farm Association. It was then sent to Louisville under a military escort where, after being reerected as a feature of the Louisville Homecoming celebration, it again went into storage. In 1909, the cabin was moved temporarily to the birthplace farm for the ceremonies attending the laying of the cornerstone of the memorial building. In 1911, upon completion of this structure,

the cabin was taken on the last of its travels back to the site of its origin and reerected within the memorial building.

## The Farm and the Memorial Building

In 1904, the Lincoln Farm Association was formed for the purpose of raising funds by popular subscription to purchase the birthplace and make it a national memorial. Richard Lloyd Jones, then managing editor, and Robert J. Collier, publisher of *Collier's Weekly*, were its leading members. Of the 116½ acres now comprising the historic site, 110½ were purchased for the Lincoln Farm Association in 1905, although title did not pass to the association until 1907. On April 16, 1916, the Lincoln Farm Association deeded its holdings to the United States of America.

The memorial building, designed by John Russell Pope and built of Connecticut pink granite and Tennessee marble, was constructed by the Lincoln Farm Association in the years 1909-11 through funds raised by popular subscription. Over 100,000 citizens, many of them school children, con-



*The Sinking Spring.*

tributed to this fund. The cornerstone of the building was laid on February 12, 1909, the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, and it was dedicated on November 9, 1911.

### The Park

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site comprises 116½ acres of land, nearly 100 acres of which were included in the original Thomas Lincoln farm. Here are the memorial building housing the traditional Lincoln birthplace log cabin, the Sinking Spring, and the ancient boundary oak tree which was a landmark at the time of Lincoln's birth. The area was established as a National Park in 1916. On September 8, 1959, the designation was changed to Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site.

### How To Reach the Park

The Abraham Lincoln birthplace is about 3 miles south of Hodgenville, Ky., on U.S. 31E-State Route 61. Hodgenville is about 50 miles south of Louisville.

### Mission 66

The new visitor center, expanded parking areas, and other improvements are part of MISSION 66, a 10-year National Park Service program whose goal is to provide adequate visitor services at all units in the National Park System by 1966.

You may show your appreciation of this historic site by leaving all natural and historic objects unimpaired for others to enjoy.

### About Your Visit

We suggest you begin your tour at the visitor center. Here you will learn about the main points of interest in the area and see an audio-visual program and exhibits depicting Abraham Lincoln's background and early environment in pioneer America. Among the exhibits is the original Bible of Thomas Lincoln.

From September through May, the National Historic Site is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. During June, July, and August, the hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.; it is closed on Christmas Day. This area remains on Eastern Standard Time throughout the year.

The Nancy Lincoln Inn near the parking area sells gifts and souvenirs. The inn is privately owned and the National Park Service exercises no control over it.

### Administration

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Hodgenville, Ky., is in immediate charge.

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN BIRTHPLACE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

## KENTUCKY



COOKEVILLE DETAIL OF  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN BIRTHPLACE

## NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



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